

What is claimed is:

1. A method for execution by a client apparatus, connected to a communication network, to receive content data, said method comprising:

a step of receiving, from an external content supplier, content data and first management information that enables trial use of the content data and then storing the received content data and first management information in memory;

a step of, in response to operation of a user of said client apparatus desiring normal use of the content data stored in said memory, issuing a normal use request to a server apparatus connected to the communication network;

a step of receiving, via the communication network, second management information supplied by said server apparatus in response to the normal use request, said second management information authorizing the normal use of the content data; and

a step of, in response to reception of said second management information from said server apparatus, replacing said first management information corresponding to the content data of which the normal use is requested, stored in said memory, with said second management information.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1 which further comprises a reproduction control step of, when desired content data is to be reproduced by said client apparatus, reproducing the content data on a trial basis with a limited reproduction function if said first

management information is attached to the content data to be reproduced, but reproducing the content data normally with no reproduction function limitation if said second management information is attached to the content data to be reproduced.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said second management information is stored in said memory after being encrypted using, as an encryption key, predetermined information specific to said client apparatus, and

which further comprises a step of, when said second management information encrypted and stored in said memory is to be read out from said memory for reproduction of the desired content data, decrypting said second management information using, as a decryption key, the predetermined information specific to said client apparatus.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said external content supply means is a recording medium storing the content data and said first management information that enables trial use of the content data, and said recording medium is removably attached to said client apparatus.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said external content supplier is a storage device storing the content data and said first management information that enables trial use of the content data, and said storage device is connected to said server apparatus or said communication network.

6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein at least the content data supplied by said external supplier is data encrypted in a predetermined manner, and which further comprises a step of decrypting the encrypted content data using a common decryption key.

7. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein at least the content data supplied by said server apparatus is data encrypted in a predetermined manner, and which further comprises a step of decrypting the encrypted content data using a common decryption key.

8. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein same management information is used as said first management information and said second management information, said same management information including limitation information for providing trial use of desired content data and regular use information indicative of allowability/non-allowability of regular use of desired content data, and

wherein, when the regular use information indicates "non-allowable", said same management information functions as said first management information functions to allow desired content data to be used only on a trial basis in accordance with the limitation information, while, when the regular use information indicates "allowable", said same information functions as said second management information functions to allow desired content

data to be used normally without being limited in accordance with the limitation information.

9. A method for execution by a server apparatus to supply content data to a client apparatus connected to a communication network, said method comprising:

a step of receiving, via the communication network, a normal use request of content data from a client apparatus having already stored therein the content data and first management information that enables trial use of the content data; and

a transmission step of determining, in response to the normal use request received from said client apparatus, whether the normal use of the content data is allowable or non-allowable, and transmitting second management information authorizing the normal use of the content data to said client apparatus via the communication network if the normal use of the content data has been determined as allowable,

wherein, in response to reception of said second management information from said server apparatus, said client apparatus replaces said first management information, corresponding to the content data of which the normal use is requested, with said second management information, so that the normal use of the content data is permitted.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9 which further comprises an encryption step of encrypting said second management information to be transmitted to said client apparatus, using, as an encryption

key, predetermined information specific to said client apparatus, and wherein said transmission step transmits said second management information encrypted by said encryption step to said client apparatus.

11. A method as claimed in claim 9 wherein said server apparatus includes memory for storing said second management information for a plurality of items of content data, and said transmission step reads out, from said memory, said second management information of content data of which the normal use has been determined as allowable.

12. A method as claimed in claim 9 wherein same management information is used as said first management information and said second management information, said same management information including limitation information for providing trial use of desired content data and regular use information indicative of allowability/non-allowability of regular use of desired content data, and

wherein, when the regular use information indicates "non-allowable", said same management information functions as said first management information functions to allow desired content data to be used only on a trial basis in accordance with the limitation information, while, when the regular use information indicates "allowable", said same information functions as said second management information functions to allow desired content data to be used normally without being limited in accordance with

the limitation information.

13. A computer program containing a group of instructions to cause a computer of a client apparatus to perform a method for execution by the client apparatus, connected to a communication network, to receive content data, said method comprising:

a step of receiving, from an external content supplier, content data and first management information that enables trial use of the content data and then storing the received content data and first management information in memory;

a step of, in response to operation of a user of said client apparatus desiring normal use of the content data stored in said memory, issuing a normal use request to a server apparatus connected to the communication network;

a step of receiving, via the communication network, second management information supplied by said server apparatus in response to the normal use request, said second management information authorizing the normal use of the content data; and

a step of, in response to reception of said second management information from said server apparatus, replacing said first management information corresponding to the content data of which the normal use is requested, stored in said memory, with said second management information.

14. A computer program containing a group of instructions to cause a computer of a server apparatus to perform a method for execution by said server apparatus to supply content data to a client

apparatus connected to a communication network, said method comprising:

a step of receiving, via the communication network, a normal use request of content data from a client apparatus having already stored therein the content data and first management information that enables trial use of the content data; and

a transmission step of determining, in response to the normal use request received from said client apparatus, whether the normal use of the content data is allowable or non-allowable, and transmitting second management information authorizing the normal use of the content data to said client apparatus via the communication network if the normal use of the content data has been determined as allowable,

wherein, in response to reception of said second management information from said server apparatus, said client apparatus replaces said first management information, corresponding to the content data of which the normal use is requested, with said second management information, so that the normal use of the content data is permitted.

15. A client apparatus comprising:

a storage device that stores content data and first management information supplied by an external content supplier, said first management information enabling trial use of the content data; and

a processing device coupled with said storage device and adapted to:

in response to operation of a user of said client apparatus desiring normal use of the content data stored in said memory, issue a normal use request to a server apparatus connected to a communication network;

via the communication network, receive second management information supplied by said server apparatus in response to the normal use request, said second management information authorizing the normal use of the content data; and

in response to reception of said second management information, replace said first management information corresponding to the content data of which the normal use is requested, stored in said memory, with said second management information.

16. A client apparatus in claim 15 wherein said processing device is further adapted to reproduce, when desired content data is to be reproduced by said client apparatus, the content data on a trial basis with a limited reproduction function if said first management information is attached to the content data to be reproduced, but reproduce the content data normally with no reproduction function limitation if said second management information is attached to the content data to be reproduced.

17. A server apparatus connectable to a client apparatus via a communication network, said server apparatus comprising:

a receiver that receives, via the communication network, a normal use request of content data from a client apparatus having



already stored therein the content data and first management information that enables trial use of the content data;

a transmitter; and

a processor coupled with said receiver and said transmitter, said processor adapted to:

in response to the normal use request received from the client apparatus, determine whether the normal use of the content data is allowable or non-allowable; and

transmit second management information authorizing the normal use of the content data to the client apparatus via said transmitter and the communication network if the normal use of the content data has been determined as allowable,

wherein, in response to reception of said second management information from said server apparatus, said client apparatus replaces said first management information, corresponding to the content data of which the normal use is requested, with said second management information, so that the normal use of the content data is permitted.

18. A server apparatus as claimed in claim 17 which further comprises memory storing said second management information for a plurality of items of content data, and said transmission step reads out, from said memory, said second management information of content data of which the normal use has been determined as allowable.

19. An apparatus as claimed in claim 15 wherein same

management information is used as said first management information and said second management information, said same management information including limitation information for providing trial use of desired content data and regular use information indicative of allowability/non-allowability of regular use of desired content data, and

wherein, when the regular use information indicates "non-allowable", said same management information functions as said first management information functions to allow desired content data to be used only on a trial basis in accordance with the limitation information, while, when the regular use information indicates "allowable", said same information functions as said second management information functions to allow desired content data to be used normally without being limited in accordance with the limitation information.

20. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18 wherein same management information is used as said first management information and said second management information, said same management information including limitation information for providing trial use of desired content data and regular use information indicative of allowability/non-allowability of regular use of desired content data, and

wherein, when the regular use information indicates "non-allowable", said same management information functions as said first management information functions to allow desired content data to be used only on a trial basis in accordance with the

limitation information, while, when the regular use information indicates "allowable", said same information functions as said second management information functions to allow desired content data to be used normally without being limited in accordance with the limitation information.